

Amherst Recycling & Refuse Management Committee

Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2014, 4:00 PM, DPW Conference Room

Attending: Craig Goff, John Root, Cristina Cox Fernandes, Brenda Kennedy-Davies, Arnie Alper, Arleen Miller (MA DEP--technical assistance), Sue Morrello, Steve Telega (Transfer Station supervisor) Susan Waite

Transfer Station Overview: Arlene met with Guilford and John Musante and toured the Transfer Station since our 9/4/14 meeting. These are her preliminary observations as an “outsider”:

- She has seen many transfer stations and considers this one a “Very special and fabulous place.” It is immaculate, well-managed and provides “one-stop shopping” for a person’s disposal needs.
- Serves Pelham, Shutesbury, Amherst schools & various Town of Amherst departments, in addition to Amherst residents and local commercial organizations
- Operates with three full-time and one part-time employee and is open to the public three days/week. The hours of operation serve the population.
- More comprehensive than many transfer stations with its scale and the breadth of items it accommodates.

Arlene asked Guilford what things would look like if the Transfer Station closed. He said the Station would likely stay open for Town use only. If this occurs, certain operating costs would remain and would need to be covered by the General Fund.

It is unclear what the problem is, and we need data to determine cause(s) of \$100K gap in FY2014. Typically the annual sticker fee covers fixed operating costs (salaries, machinery, etc.) and variable costs are covered by disposal fees.

Discuss Transfer Station options and strategies

There are obvious things that could be done to improve the situation. For instance, Pelham & Shutesbury residents could be charged a stipend to allow them to use the facility. Can the TS accommodate more people? Steve feels could handle no more than 50% more. Per Susan in FY2012 Pelham & Shutesbury residents ~ 28% of total residential stickers sold.

Could we invite Granby to use it? Currently they have only curbside and nothing else. Look at fees other Town departments pay. Are they being charged an appropriate amount?

Question: What exactly does Guilford need by November 1? Plan for TS only?
TS issue is paramount because of municipal budgeting timeline. Our charge should be to find a way to make the TS as cost neutral as possible. This is very complicated because so many things are happening in SWEF that have nothing to do with TS.

The group added to a list of ideas previously generated by Susan and Steve for decreasing expenses and increasing revenue.

continued

Ideas for Attaining Town Trash & Recycling Service Solvency

Expense Reduction:

- Eliminate HHW expense from SWEF (General Fund and/or WWTP/Water Dept funded). RRMC put pressure on box stores to hold (in parking lot). Hold HHW at alternate location (e.g. Fort River School).
- Fund recycling coordinator position via general fund since position supports town.
- School composting costs paid by schools, subsidized by town or eliminated.
- Explore other disposal alternatives for mixed containers (pay MRF or UMass?).
- Separate funding for landfill monitoring costs (one or both landfills). Also TS performs annual weed whacking which takes ~3 wks on PT basis (Wed & Fridays) and in past has gone into overtime.
- Evaluate employment situation: consider reducing some positions to PT, make sure time spent working for other DPW departments is allotted appropriately (i.e. General Fund).
- Stop accepting residential C+D and MSW (eliminate PAYT program).

Income Generation

- ID disposal fee price adjustments.
- Charge TOA per household admin fee for services entire town benefits from (e.g. public education/web, battery collection, event recycling, Xmas trees, leaves, HHW).
- TOA pays for resident sticker access via General Fund.
- Bring all or some paper to Sunoco (Holyoke).
- Charge Pelham and Shutesbury annual fee to cover admin costs for their use of/access to TS or increase sticker price for their residents.
- Charge UMass (& AC& HC?) admin fee to cover student access to TS or sell annual student pass @ low price (\$20?).
- Charge for thermometers, thermostats, ballasts (minimal \$1).
- DPW pay for trash (dumpster out back).
- Explore day pass option for residents (\$25?).
- Explore value-add TS services that will seduce those not already purchasing stickers to purchase them.
- Actively advertise TS sticker to residents. 2012 waste survey indicated that some residents are not aware of option to purchase sticker, allowing access to TS services.
- Increase price of annual TS stickers for Amherst residents.

Additional (new) ideas:

- Invite Granby to or other contractors to use TS (would require permit change, which is not a big deal per Arlene).
- Charge appropriate amounts to town services/departments for TS use
- Consider different hours for TS so as to accommodate as many people as possible.
- Sell PAYT bags in other locations to promote PAYT option and make it more user-friendly.

We need financial #'s and the budget synopsis so we can cull TS info out of the SWEF. Susan will get these from Guilford.

Arlene noted that master plans can be long or short and created quickly or take years. Some communities don't bother because sometimes they are simply put on a shelf. The key is to keep them targeted to the need.

She will be away until October 6. We will schedule a meeting after her return. In the meantime, the Committee can begin working on development of the first part of a solid waste master plan, which typically answers the question "Where are we now?" It describes the status quo: where are we (current activities), what the issues and problems are, and what our vision is and the action steps required to take us there.